

null
Lucia A Keegan 10/27/2006 10:14:41 AM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

Cable
Text:

UNCLAS PARIS 07021

SIPDIS
cyparis:
ACTION: UNESCO
INFO: ECON AMBU AMB POL AMBO DCM SCI

DISSEMINATION: UNESCOX
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: DCM: ACKOSS
DRAFTED: POL: MAPOINTER
CLEARED: CLEAR: NJCOOPER

VZCZCFRI776
RR RUEHC
DE RUEHFR #7021 2981542
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 251542Z OCT 06
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2525

UNCLAS PARIS 007021

SIPDIS

FROM USMISSION UNESCO PARIS

FOR OES - ANDREW REYNOLDS
FOR IO - JIM DUFTY
DEPARTMENT PASS NSF FOR ROSE GOMBAY
DEPARTMENT PASS OSTP FOR GENE WHITNEY

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [UNESCO](#) [ENRG](#) [PHUM](#)
SUBJECT: UNESCO SEMINAR EXPLORES ACCESS TO ENERGY FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

¶1. Summary: Representatives from UNESCO, private companies, government agencies, and NGOs gathered for the seminar "Access to Energy for All." The conference, attended by 30 people, took place at UNESCO, but was actually organized by an NGO with ties to UNESCO. Several UNESCO secretariat members did take part. One secretariat member from the Social Sciences Division suggested that energy and human rights should be linked in an international legal framework, though without specifying a UNESCO role. End Summary.

¶2. On October 19th and 20th 2006, the "Access to Energy for All" seminar took place under the patronage of UNESCO at the initiative of the International Union of Technical Associations and Organizations, an NGO whose headquarters are at UNESCO Paris. The seminar was constructed around four themes:

- a) Current and Future Requirements
- b) Megacities and Urban Areas, Isolated Rural Areas
- c) Humankind and Energy
- d) Governance, Financing of Programs and Projects

¶3. UNESCO Section Chief of the Division of Social Sciences, Christina von F|rstenberg, gave an intervention titled "Energy Ethics and Human Rights." She proposed the creation of an international treaty or an international law on access to energy without specifying a UNESCO role. Although nothing exists currently, she noted that this does not rule out the possibility of an emergence of an international customary norm related to access to energy. She named several existing international agreements: the International Convention on Economic and Social Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, that could serve as a framework for the emergence of such a norm. Her

hypothetical proposal for an international legal right to energy was as follows, "The basic right would be designed to ensure access on a basis of equality and non-discrimination to a sufficient resource, relatively efficient, safe, and affordable supply of (ideally clean and sustainable) energy." She reiterated the importance of safety with this proposed international legal right as it relates to human rights

¶4. Biomass energy resources were repeatedly criticized for their hazardous nature to users and the environment as well as their negative contributions to gender disparity. Ms. Teresa Malyshev, of the International Energy Agency, stressed the importance of making biomass resources safer and more modern. Presenters highlighted that Africa and poorer developing nations need to be a high priority in achieving greater levels of energy access. Upon noting that 13 UN agencies currently deal with energy, Mr. Serge Perez of the NGO "Droit à l'énergie SOS Futur," stressed the need for a coordinator and a specific framework to deal with energy, perhaps a UN Program. Mr. Perez also argued that the right to energy should be a human right. Mr. Jamal Saghir, Director of the Energy, Water, and Electricity Supply Board at the World Bank, confessed that realistically, only access to "half" as proposed to "all" would be achieved.

¶5. UNESCO Program Specialist responsible for Renewable Energies, Osman Benchikh, presented on "Renewable Energy for Development," He identified statistics illustrating that greater access to electricity increases life expectancy, literacy, GDP/capita, and reduces birthrates. He stressed that sustainable development cannot be separated from access to energy. He indicated that electricity is a vector for creating jobs and that renewable energy could be useful in this regard.

¶6. UNESCO Director of the Division of Basic Sciences and Engineering, Maciej Nalecz, discussed issues related to energy access such as poverty, climate change, environmental destruction, and fuel depletion. He contended that the attainment of the MDGs depends on whether energy can be provided to groups targeted by these goals. The hazards and negative effects of biomass energy resources were identified and he stressed that up to two billion people are currently living without electricity. He suggested that centralized renewable energy services can provide a viable alternative for modern energy.

¶7. At the close of the seminar, topics concerning financing and institution-building were discussed as they relate to the task of increasing access to energy.

¶8. Comment: This meeting also coincides with a push by the Russian Federation at the last Executive Board to establish up a renewable energy division at UNESCO. Of course, all discussion relating to a future UNESCO role in energy must be subject to the results of the ongoing sciences review. Although this is the first we have heard of a normative instrument in this area, we will certainly press the point that this is not the way to go. End Comment. OLIVER